

kept in a state of abject terror. St. Augustine, in a well-known passage, declares that when their shout of "Praise be to God!" was heard, it was more dreaded than the roar of a lion. They were armed with wooden clubs, which they named "Israel's/* and these they did not scruple to use upon the Catholics, whose churches they entered and plundered, committing the most violent excesses, though they were pledged to celibacy. Gibbon justly compares them to the Camisards of Languedoc at the commencement of the 18th century, and others have likened them to the Syrian Assassins at the time of the Crusades and the Jewish Sicarii of Palestine during the first century of the Christian era. They formed, it seems, a sort of Christian Jacquerie, possessed in their wilder moments with a frantic passion for martyrdom and imploring those whom they met to kill them. The best of them were fit only for a madhouse ; the worst were fit only for a gaol. Probably they had little connection with the respectable Donatists in the cities, whose organisation was precisely the same as that of the Catholics, and their operations were mainly restricted to the thinly populated districts on the borders of the desert.

On one occasion, however, Constantine was obliged to interfere. The Donatists in Cirta, the capital of Numidia,—which had been renamed Constantina in honour of the Emperor, had forcibly seized the church of the Catholics, that had been built at Constantine's command. The Catholics, therefore, appealed to the Emperor, and knowing that he was pledged to a policy of non-interference, they did not